



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380-0001

IN REPLY REFER TO:

CMC-MHH
22 Dec 94

WHITE LETTER NO. 15-94

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge

Subj: SUICIDE PREVENTION

1. Suicide. It happens in the Marine Corps, all too often. I believe that we, as leaders, can do more to prevent this tragic loss of life, the loss of a fellow Marine.

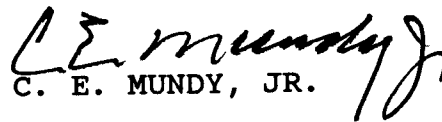
2. Suicide is the final act of desperation. I want to emphasize the word "final," but not simply because it ends a life. People who commit suicide almost always exhibit signs of depression or desperation before the actual act of suicide. Something significant has occurred in their life, and it is causing a tremendous amount of psychological pain which they have been unable to overcome. They simply want relief from seemingly unsolvable problems, and whatever they have tried hasn't worked. Finally, they begin to consider suicide. What these people need is someone to guide them to other solutions. That is where we as leaders can help.

3. Leadership is crucial to suicide prevention. If leaders know their Marines, they will see the warning signs that indicate the potential for suicide. But simply identifying the potential is not enough. The key to suicide prevention is taking action. If one of your Marines exhibits the suicide warning signs, get help for that Marine before it's too late. Make sure your Marines understand that it's OK to seek help for personal problems. Guide those who need help to the Family Services Center, Chaplain, Medical Officer, or others who are trained to help. Then follow up. That's a major part of our job as leaders.

4. ALMAR 340/94 contains the suicide warning signs, but they are so important that I'm going to repeat them here. You should take action if any of your Marines display these signs:

- a. Significant marital or personal problems.
- b. Statements about suicidal thoughts, intention, or plan.
- c. Unexplained mood changes or depression.
- d. Unusual interest in death (in conversations, letters, etc.).

- e. Decline in job performance or personal appearance.
 - f. Changes in appetite or sleep pattern.
 - g. Social withdrawal or isolation.
 - h. Increased use of alcohol.
 - i. Giving away possessions or suddenly writing an unexplained will.
5. Don't ignore the warning signs. Take action, then follow up. We are the key to suicide prevention, and our actions will ultimately save lives.


C. E. MUNDY, JR.